

**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
Washington, DC 20515

May 14, 2003

The Honorable Robert B. Zoellick  
United States Trade Representative  
600 17th Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20508

Dear Mr. Ambassador:

We write as supporters of negotiations for a U.S.- Central American free trade agreement (CAFTA). We believe that a comprehensive agreement, if properly structured, could create new opportunities for workers, businesses and farmers in all our countries, help break the cycle of poverty in the region, and serve as a model for a hemispheric trade agreement.

That said, we are not supportive of proposed U.S. draft text for the FTA's labor chapter, which we understand will be tabled at this week's negotiating round. The current version of this text does not adequately address the economic and individual impact of the egregious conditions for workers in the region, and should not be the starting point for consideration of these issues. Substantial modification is vital as soon as practicable in order to ensure broad Congressional support for this agreement.

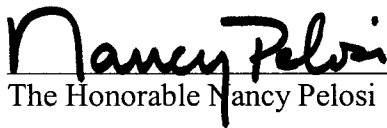
We urge that the CAFTA agreement contain a fully enforceable commitment for signatories to adopt and enforce in their laws internationally-recognized core labor standards. As the International Labor Organization and the U.S. Department of State have documented, the CAFTA countries' labor regimes do not embody the five internationally-recognized core labor standards, particularly with respect to freedom of association and the right to organize and bargain collectively. Moreover, there is no history of adequate or consistent enforcement of the laws that do exist; indeed, the record is often one of willful disregard.

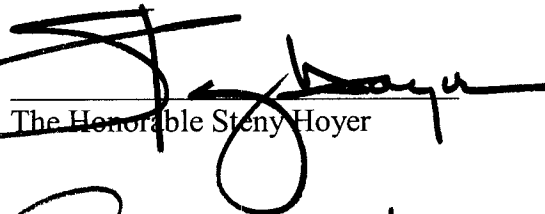
We believe that the commitment to adopt and effectively enforce the core labor standards, with provisions for phased-in compliance, positive incentives and substantially expanded technical assistance programs, will support our shared goal of further trade liberalization that improves standards of living. To do so will serve the goal of strengthening the international trading system, promoting the rule of law, facilitating the economic development of countries in great need, and maximizing benefits of expanded trade to U.S. workers, farmers and businesses.

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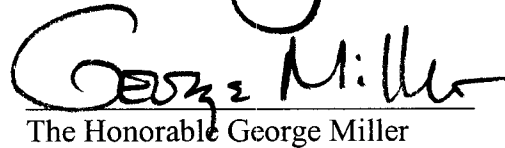
Addressing this issue in a meaningful way will help assist in building broad, bipartisan support for this agreement. We look forward to working with the Administration in this and other areas, and stand ready to discuss these views further with you at your convenience.

Sincerely,

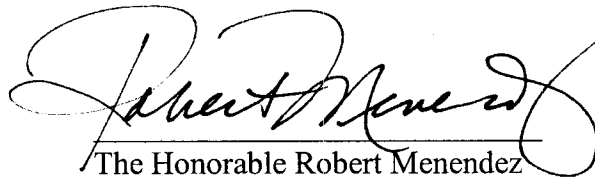
  
The Honorable Nancy Pelosi

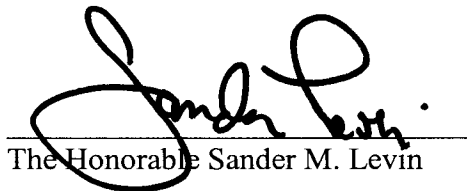
  
The Honorable Steny Hoyer

  
The Honorable Charles B. Rangel

  
The Honorable George Miller

  
The Honorable Robert T. Matsui

  
The Honorable Robert Menendez

  
The Honorable Sander M. Levin